DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 917 IR 056 192

AUTHOR McNeal, Elaine N.
TITLE Examining Job Satisfaction Levels of Student Assistant Employees of Akron Summit County Public Libraries: A Survey.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 44p.; Master's Research Paper, Kent State University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Undetermined (040) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Employment Experience; *Job Satisfaction; *Library Personnel; *Public Libraries; *Student Attitudes; *Student Employment; Student Surveys; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Ohio (Akron); *Ohio (Summit County)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents survey research on the job satisfaction of student library employees in the Akron Summit County (Ohio) Public Library system. Approximately 100 (50% return) student employees were questioned about several dimensions of their employment experience including respondent gender, length of employment, previous job experience, hours worked per week, location of employment, level of school attained, type of work done on the library's automated systems, general duties performed, favored duties, level of satisfaction, and interest in a career in library science. Students appeared to be fairly happy in their positions, though for the most part these positions were not seen as leading to a career in library science. The level of student satisfaction was related to management style and attitude of their immediate supervisors and of the other full time staff with whom they worked. Five figures and tables present response data. The cover letters to supervisors and student assistants and the survey are appended. (Contains 15 references.) (Author/AEF)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 401 917

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

EXAMINING JOB SATISFACTION LEVELS OF STUDENT ASSISTANT EMPLOYEES OF AKRON SUMMIT COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A SURVEY

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Elaine N. McNeal

April, 1996

IR056193

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. DuMont

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Abstract:

This paper presents survey research on the job satisfaction of student library employees in the Akron Summit County Public Library system. The survey questioned student employees about several dimensions of their employment experience including respondent gender, length of employment, previous job experience, hours worked per week, location of employment, level of school attained, type of work done on the library's automated systems, general duties performed, favored duties, level of satisfaction, and interest in a career in library science. The paper reports the student responses and concludes that students appeared to be fairly happy in their positions though for the most part these positions were not seen as leading to a career in library science. In addition it notes that the student level of job satisfaction was related to management style and attitude of their immediate supervisors and of the other full time staff with whom they worked.

Master's Research Paper by

Elaine N. McNeal

B.S. Ed., University of Akron, 1992

M.L.S., Kent State University, 1996

Approved by

Adviser Lois Buttlar Date 5-6-96

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	LISTS OF FIGURES AND TABLES	iv
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	LITERATURE REVIEW	6
III.	METHODOLOGY	12
IV.	ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY	14
V.	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	26
	APPENDIX A Cover letter to supervisors	30
	APPENDIX B Cover letter to student assistants	32
	APPENDIX C Survey	34
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	37

List of Figures

Figure 1. Length of Employment 15

Figure 2. Automated Systems Used by Respondents 17

List of Tables

Table 1. Number of Hours Students Worked per Week 16

Table 2. Job Duties Performed Regularly by Student Employees 18

Table 3. Rating of Statements to Measure Level of Job Satisfaction of Student Employees 21

I. INTRODUCTION

The Akron Summit County Public Library system, or the ASCPL as it is often shortened to in reference, has been serving the area communities, in one form or another, since 1834. This large library system includes a central main building, a mobile service, and seventeen branches. The staffing for the Akron system is varied. There are, of course, the professional librarians who hold masters' degrees and management directors with other professional degrees. There are also full time and part time paraprofessionals who do not necessarily hold degrees. And last, but not least by far, there are part time student employees.

Although the tasks performed by these student assistants (once known as "pages") are not considered professional, these young employees play a very important role in the success of the library's function. The principal task of students in the Akron libraries is to shelve materials and maintain the organization of the library's collection. This is a very important job, as mistakes in shelving can cause items to become hidden or unable to be located when needed. Student assistants may also be relied on to answer simple phone questions or to help patrons find items they need. They are often the "jack-of-all trades" employees who keep the library running so that the regular full time staff can do their jobs. Several of the articles reviewed in chapter II illustrate the value of young student employees in libraries. Finney and McCombs' article on the successful hiring of

"at-risk" teenagers by the Berkeley Public libraries is one example.[7] In this program, the student employees assisted young adult librarians in developing programs for young library users. Also of significance are Sager's [8] and Lipper's[9] articles on successful teenage volunteer programs in libraries. Quite often in the Akron libraries, the teens who volunteer with the Summer Reading Club program will later be hired as student assistants. Many of the articles described programs in which volunteers performed duties such as shelving and assisting patrons. In the Akron libraries, however, these tasks are the responsibility of student assistants. Volunteers are generally used only in the summer months to help out with the Summer Reading Club events offered by the individual libraries, and they do not shelve materials or assist patrons as part of their volunteering.

Having worked as a student assistant for seven years in the Akron Summit County Public Library system the researcher is very familiar with the duties of the job as well as other non-specified activities students often perform. The staff at the branch at which the researcher was originally employed has always tried to make the student assistants feel important to the library's function. The full time staff appreciates the work the students do, and includes students in library functions like staff meetings as well as social gatherings. Also, on several occasions, the students are called on to

[7]Kay Finney and Kim McCombs, "Teenagers Work Well in the Berkeley Public Library," VOYA 17 (April 1994): 1-14

[8]Donald Sager, "A Season for Service," Public Libraries 32 (May/June 1993): 135-141.

[9] Lucretia Lipper, "YAs Need TLC, Especially in the Summer," VOYA 16 (June 1993): 76-78.

help develop and implement displays and special programs. For example, the children's librarian would often allow students to help with craft programs and even story times. In general, the students at that branch are very happy and satisfied with their jobs. It was a positive experience as a student assistant, combined with the encouragement of the full time staff, which led to the researcher's decision to become a librarian. The researcher is curious, therefore, to know how student assistants at other Akron libraries feel about their jobs.

Researchers have studied job satisfaction levels among librarians[10] and paraprofessional employees[11] [12] of public libraries, but very little research exists concerning student worker job satisfaction. And no surveys exist at this time dealing with the student assistant workers of the Akron libraries. Examining the job satisfaction levels of these young employees could prove useful to administrators and supervisors, as the results will illustrate how student assistants in Akron's libraries feel about their jobs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine, through a brief survey, the general level of job satisfaction of students in ASCPL's main library, mobile services, and seventeen branches. This study

[10] Neil Simmons, "Job Satisfaction and Styles of Supervision Among Librarians in a London Borough," Assistant Librarian 10 (October 1980): 32-134.

[11] Robert Burgin and Patsy Hansel, "Library Management: A Dialogue," Wilson Library Bulletin 1 (September 1991): 66-68.

[12] Donna K. Fitch, "Job Satisfaction Among Library Support Staff in Alabama Public Libraries," College and Research Libraries 4 (July 1990): 313-320.

will examine the levels of job satisfaction among the students in the ASCPL system, including the main library, mobile services, and the seventeen branches. This information is important, as the young student employees are invaluable staff members in all libraries. As the job descriptions and duties will likely vary greatly from library to library, it was hypothesized that job satisfaction levels would also vary. Student assistants at branch libraries often perform many duties, from shelving to circulation to aiding in library programs. Main library student assistants, on the other hand, have more restricted duties. With this in mind, levels of job satisfaction were expected to vary from the branches to the main library as well.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the term "student assistant" is defined as an employee at least 16 years of age who is attending school full or at least part time. There are currently around 100 student assistants in the Akron Summit County Public Library system.

Limitations

This study was limited to the student assistants of the ASCPL system, and the findings are not necessarily applicable to all library student assistant workers. The study did not include the employees classified as "shelvers" (both full and part time in Akron) because their only function is to shelve materials daily; and they do not

interact with patrons in the libraries, while student assistants constantly interact with patrons as part of their daily work routine.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As no existing literature was found concerning public library student worker job satisfaction, the subject had to be broadened to include related topics. The works found were then grouped into three main categories: job satisfaction articles, articles about student workers, and articles about teen volunteerism in libraries.

Job Satisfaction

Simmons conducted a detailed case study of librarians in a London town. His study revealed that in general the librarians' job satisfaction was related to the types of job supervision in the work place. The respondents were more concerned with their co-workers and with their supervisors' behaviors than they were with their actual duties at work. Simmons had categorized four styles of management supervision, and then charted the needs of employees in the workplace, from basic safety needs to levels of self-actualization. His findings ranked in order the favorite styles of management and also charted the needs deficiency of the respondents. Using these tables, Simmons determined that there was some correlation between supervisory styles and the job satisfaction of the librarians surveyed.[13]

A study by Moran and Neenan examined the job satisfaction of the "invisible managers" in public libraries. These managers are the specialized administrators who are not involved in direct public

[13]Simmons, "Job Satisfaction and Styles of Supervision Among Librarians in a London Borough," pp. 32-134.

service. Unfortunately these workers were not happy in their jobs. They found that 40% of these administrators wished to leave the library, feeling unappreciated in their jobs. The authors concluded that special attention and appreciation of these specialists is needed in order for them to stay in libraries.[2]

Burgin and Hansel discuss the general feeling of dissatisfaction in library paraprofessionals, who often feel put down and ignored by the professional staff. Although the support staff often performs duties considered "professional" they feel that librarians generally do not show them appreciation, which is a great mistake considering the importance of paraprofessional staff.[14]

More encouraging is Fitch's study involving a six-scaled index used to examine the job satisfaction of support staff in Alabama Academic Libraries. The researcher found a generally high level of satisfaction, especially in women. Fitch offers a few suggestions for improving the work place for all employees.[15]

Student Workers

Two very interesting articles praise young student employees in libraries. The first, by Nagel and Molloy, outlines a very successful program at an academic library. In this case, experienced student employees were given the opportunity to train and supervise the newer employees. The experienced students gained status and

[14]Robert Burgin and Patsy Hansel, "Library Management: A Dialogue," pp. 66-68.

[15]Donna K. Fitch, "Job Satisfaction Among Library Support Staff in Alabama Public Libraries," pp. 313-320.

supervisory job experience; the new students learned more quickly with peers as supervisors, and the staff and patrons of the library had more success in dealing with student employees. All those involved had great benefits from the program.[16]

Finney and McCombs' article describes a special program at the Berkeley Public Libraries in which three "at risk" minority teenagers were hired through a specially funded Youth-At-Risk Program. The teens were responsible for shelving materials, assisting the young adult librarians, and creating displays for young adults. Although there were some noted problems, the benefits to all those involved, from the students to the community in general, greatly outweighed them.[17]

Teen Volunteerism

Sager's article offers the views and predictions of four librarians and a library educator concerning President Clinton's proposal of a youth service program. In the program, teens would be required to volunteer as part of high school graduation requirements, and volunteer service could be used to repay college loans. All five of the respondents, and Sager himself, strongly endorse this program, feeling that it will be useful for libraries to draw young people in as volunteers.[18]

---

[16]Mary Nagel and Jean Molloy, "In Praise of Students as Supervisors," College and Research Library News 9 (October 1991): 577-578.

[17]Kay Finney and Kim McCombs, "Teenagers Work Well in the Berkeley Public Library," pp. 11-14.

[18]Donald Sager, "A Season for Service," pp. 135-141.

Burbridge, a middle school librarian, describes a program which enlists volunteer student aides each year. These aides not only stamp cards and file materials, but also use computers to make flyers, displays, and materials' lists for teachers. They even make videotapes of school events for staff to use in classrooms and help review and test new software and CD-ROM products.[19]

Lipper's article describes a very structured New Jersey public library program called TLC (Teen Learning Connection) in which teens volunteer under the supervision of specific staff members. These young people have certain duties daily in the library, depending on their department. They are also expected to participate in social activities during their volunteer experience. The volunteers are well trained and supervised, and their position is taken seriously by the library.[20]

According to Nancy Everhart, teenagers will want to work in libraries if their needs are fulfilled. She enlists volunteers who range in abilities from gifted to learning disabled and provides them with a safe and comfortable work place, appropriate duties, and, above all, respect for their position in her school library. The group is recognized by the school and has the appreciation of the other students, faculty, and staff. She feels that if teens are given respect, responsibilities, and a comfortable work place, they will want to

[19]Carol Burbridge, "Technology and Student Aides," Book Report 12 (March/April 1994): 20-21.
[20]Lucretia Lipper, "YAs Need TLC, Especially in the Summer," pp. 76-78.

volunteer in libraries.[21]

And, finally, the last group of articles describe various successful programs in which teenagers volunteer in public libraries during the summer months. The duties of the volunteers ranged widely. For example, in Eisenhut's California public library, the summer volunteers mainly handle the library's summer reading club.[22] This is generally the case in Akron, where teen volunteers are only used in summer programming. However, according to McGrath and Fine, the teenagers who volunteer in the Clearwater Public Library System in Florida also shelve materials and assist with creating displays.[23] Still other volunteers are enlisted to carry out programs, like shows and plays, and assist the children's librarians with story and craft times for young people as Corey's volunteers do.[24] In Baldwin's library, the volunteers help patrons search the OPAC and create a newsletter for children.[25] And, in Gorman's library, the volunteers even perform some circulation functions.[26] The duties of teen volunteers, therefore, depend on the librarians who supervise them.

It was fairly surprising to find that volunteers in some libraries

---

[21]Nancy Everhart, "Library Aides: If You Fulfill Their Needs, They Will Come (and Work!)," Book Report 13 (May/June 1991): 12-13.

[22]Lynn Eisenhut, "Teen Volunteers," VOYA 11 (June 1988): 65-68.

[23]Marsha McGrath and Jane Fine, "Teen Volunteers in the Library," Public Libraries 29 (January/February 1990): 24-28.

[24]Diane Corey, "Children As Volunteers? Definitely!," Ohio Libraries 5 (January/February 1992): 19.

[25]Liz Baldwin, "A Summer Lesson in Service," School Library Journal 39 (May 1993): 40.

[26]Jan Norman, "Summertime Friends Program," Nebraska Academic Library Quarterly 23 (Summer 1992): 17.

are actually doing jobs that student employees are hired to do in large systems like the ASCPL. Teenagers can be very valuable to libraries, whether as employees or as volunteers, as many researchers reported.

III. METHODOLOGY

For this research study, a survey method was chosen. It was the most productive way to get the necessary information from the many student assistant employees of the ASCPL system, who are the subjects.

The ASCPL students were chosen as subjects for several reasons. First, there has been little research done on student workers in public libraries; and since the Akron system is large, there were plenty of student assistants to whom the questionnaire was to be distributed. Secondly, the positive and negative experiences students may have while employed by the ASCPL could influence their future career plans. Lastly, distribution of this survey would be efficient, using the inter-library mailing system. The library branch and division managers were sent a cover letter (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the survey along with the questionnaires to be distributed at each location. A cover letter (see Appendix B) and the questionnaire (see Appendix C) were sent to the students in sealed envelopes, along with another envelope for returning responses, in the library express mailing system. Anonymity of the subjects was protected as much as possible.

The collected data was subjected to statistical analysis to attain percentages, and other descriptive statistical operations were performed. The job satisfaction of students at the main library, the branches, and the mobile services was studied. The questions in the

survey were designed to reveal whether the student assistants in the ASCPL system were happy in their work. Another question that was examined in this study was whether or not the student assistants surveyed were considering the pursuit of a career in library science as a result of their job experience.

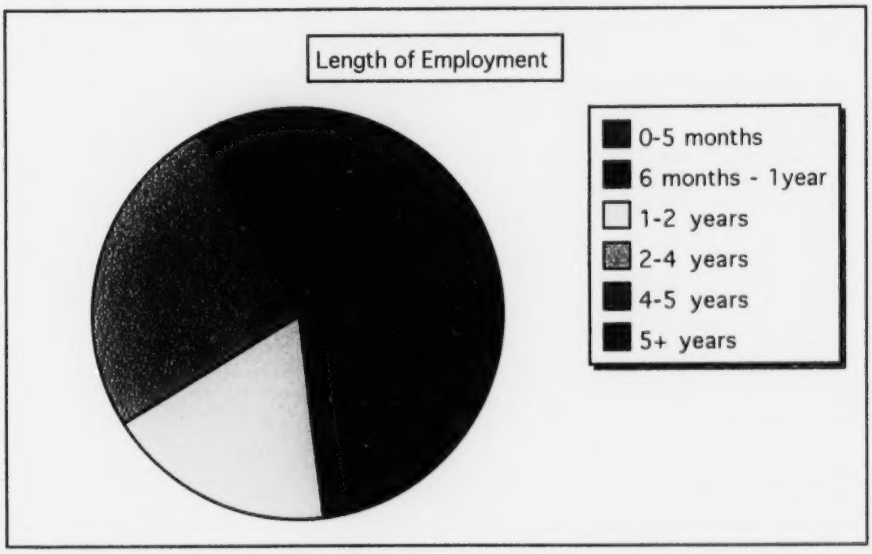
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The following chapter reports the results of the student assistant job satisfaction survey. Of the approximately 100 subjects surveyed, there were 50 completed questionnaires returned, a response rate of 50%.

In question one students were asked to identify their gender. There were 42 (84%) females and 8 (16%) males who responded, a ratio of around 5 to 1.

Question two asked how long the respondents had been employed with ASCPL. The responses were varied. Of the 50 respondents, 14 (28%) had worked for ASCPL for five months or less, 10 respondents (20%) had worked between 6 months and one year, 9 respondents (18%) had worked between one and two years, 13 respondents (26%) had worked between two and four years , 1 respondent (2%) worked between four and five years, and three respondents (6%) had worked 5 years or more. This information is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Length of Employment.



When asked in question three, if their work at ASCPL was their first work experience, 30 of the students (60%) reported having worked previously, and 18 (36%) had no previous jobs. There were 2 (4%) students who did not respond to this question.

In question four, students were asked to give an average number of hours worked per week. The responses are reported in Table 1.

Table 1.
Number of hours Students Worked per Week.

Hours	f	%
0 - 5	0	0
6 - 10	3	6
11 - 15	16	32
16 - 20	26	52
21 or more	5	10
Total	50	100

In question five students were asked to identify the location where they worked. There were 41 (82%) responses from students at branch libraries and 9 (18%) from students at the main library.

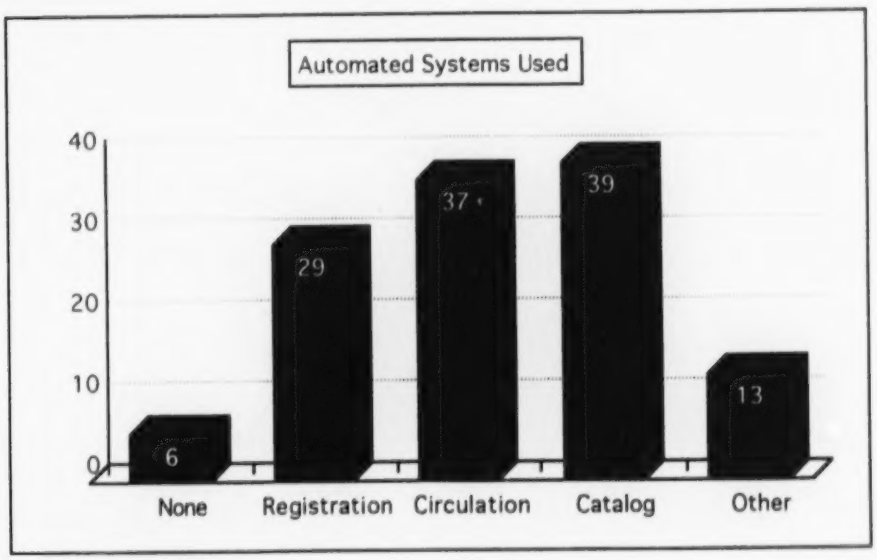
Students were asked to list their current level of schooling in question six. The majority (26 or 52%) of the students who responded attended high school; however, students in college were a close second place with 24 attending (48%). No respondents were currently attending vocational or other types of schools.

Question seven asked students to identify their employment status as full or part time. The large majority of the respondents (47 or 94%) were attending school full time, with only 2 (4%) attending part time. One student (2%) did not respond to the question.

In question eight students were asked to describe which of the libraries' automated systems they used as part of their work (see

Figure 2). Of the 50 respondents, 6 (12%) do not use an automated system, 29 (58%) use the automated registration system, 37 (74%) use the automated circulation system to charge and discharge materials from patrons, 39 (78%) use the online catalog to perform searches for patrons, and 13 (26%) use automated systems for other various functions. Among the "other functions" written in were: reserving materials for patrons (9 or 18%), fine collection (4 or 8%), discarding materials (2 or 4%), and the catch-all "everything" (3 or 6%.) It should be noted that students were directed to identify all of the systems they use; therefore, each percentage identified above is of the entire 50 respondents.

Figure 2.
Automated Systems Used by Respondents.



In question nine students were asked to identify the various job duties they perform regularly. Responses are reported in Table 2.

Table 2.
Job Duties Performed Regularly by Student Employees.

Job Duties	f	%
Shelving materials	50	100
Circulation duties	37	74
Stamping & desk	42	84
Repair materials	32	64
Filing cards	19	38
Discarding items	24	48
Catalog searches	33	66
Calling patrons	28	56
Summer program	18	36
Displays	29	58
Programs	19	38
Story times	13	26
Other duties	13	26

Among the responses for "other duties" were shelf reading (9 or 18%), errand running (3 or 6%), delivery preparation (2 or 4%), the ambiguous "everything" (5 or 10%) and several other additional duties, each of which were added only once by respondents.

In question ten students were asked to rank their favorite three job duties from the list of duties in question nine. Although nearly every duty listed had at least one vote in the ranking, three stood out with the highest number of votes:

1. Circulation duties - checking materials out to patrons and back in when they are returned - 19 (38%).
2. Stamping items (date due slips, book pockets, envelopes, etc.) - 11 (22%).
3. Shelving materials and maintaining the organization of the library - 11 (22%).

Shelving materials also had a high number of respondents who ranked it their second favorite duty (10 or 20%). The other duties ranked by the respondents had 10% or less of the votes. Also, there were three (6%) respondents who did not rank the duties at all.

Question eleven asked subjects to read a series of statements concerning satisfaction in their jobs and choose their level of agreement with each statement. Their responses are reported below and in Table 3.

Statement 1. Job is important to the library. There were 31 (62%) who strongly agreed, and 19 (38%) who agreed to this statement. None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Statement 2. Staff sees job as important. There were 13 (26%) who strongly agreed, 31 (62%) who agreed, and 6 (12%) who disagreed. No one strongly disagreed with this statement.

Statement 3. Supervisor is flexible in scheduling. There were 32 (64%) who strongly agreed, 16 (32%) who

agreed, and 2 (4%) who disagreed. No one strongly disagreed.

Statement 4. Supervisor is fair in task assignment. There were 26 (52%) who strongly agreed, 19 (38%) who agreed, 3 (6%) who disagreed, and 2 (4%) who strongly disagreed.

Statement 5. Staff shows appreciation of students. There were 15 (30%) who strongly agreed, 30 (60%) who agreed, 4 (8%) who disagreed, and 1 (2%) who strongly disagreed.

Statement 6. Patrons show appreciation of students. There were 10 (20%) who strongly agreed, 34 (68%) who agreed, 7 (14%) who disagreed, and 1 (2%) who strongly disagreed.

Statement 7. Students help with library programs. There were 12 (24%) who strongly agreed, 26 (52%) who agreed, 7 (14%) who disagreed, 3 (6%) who strongly disagreed, and 1 (2%) who did not respond to the statement at all.

Statement 8. Happy with current position as student assistant. There were 12 (24%) who strongly agreed, 31 (62%) who agreed, 5 (10%) who disagreed, 1 (2%) who strongly disagreed, and 1 (2%) who did not respond to this statement.

Table 3.
Rating of Statements to Measure Level of Job Satisfaction of Student Employees.

Statement	Strongly Agree f	%	Agree f	%	Disagree f	%	Strongly Disagree f	%
1. Job is important to library.	31	62	19	38				
2. Staff sees job as important.	13	26	31	62	6	12		
3. Supervisor is flexible.	32	64	16	32	2	4		
4. Task assignment is fair.	26	52	19	38	3	6	2	4
5. Staff appreciates position.	15	30	30	60	4	8	1	2
6. Patrons appreciate position.	10	20	34	68	7	14	1	2
7. Students help at programs.	12	24	26	52	7	14	3	6
8. Students happy with job.	12	24	31	62	5	10	1	2

* Statements 7 and 8 each had a single non-response.

Question twelve asked the students to indicate their interest in pursuing a career in library science. There were 11 students (22%) who are considering a career in libraries, and 33 (66%) who are not interested in library careers. In addition, 5 respondents (10%) indicated that a library career is a possibility. One student (2%) had no answer for this question.

Students were given an opportunity to write in additional comments in question thirteen. There were several students who took the time to write in comments. Each of these comments is significant to the study, as it offers insight into how the subjects feel about their

jobs. These comments are listed below.

" I feel that the library system makes it very difficult for students to move up at their own branches. When jobs are posted, most of the positions are being filled by others in the system."

" Working as a student is much more satisfying than working in other conditions such as a fast food restaurant."

" When I first began, I loved my job; but now that I have been here almost 3 years, it has become repetitive and monetarily not fulfilling. However, I'd rather be doing this than flipping hamburgers."

" Many times student assistants take on more work than the regular staff, and in some cases we are taken advantage of. Because of this we find our positions abused."

"Under question 12, you use the term "regular staff." My answers reflect not including the librarians. Our branch librarian has no idea of the amount of work we do to keep our branch neat and clean. She is an

extremely difficult person to work for and with and does not appreciate anyone."

" I don't think the job of student assistant should be taken for granted. A majority of the staff really appreciates what we do and express it regularly, but there are several people who take our job for granted and underestimate the work and effort we put into the job."

"I don't like having to work here for six years without getting an LA 1 position" (Library Assistant - a part time position which includes a regular pay scale and hours, unlike the varied hours of the student position.)

" I feel that as student assistants many more tasks fall on us than the branch librarian recognizes and at times I feel that she purposely neglects recognition to anyone but herself."

" This isn't just a job; it is a strong level of communication."

" Being a student assistant is not a horrible job, but the

position needs to have more responsibility, more pay and more opportunities to be promoted."

"Sometimes the supervisor tells me to do too many tasks at one time. She does it unknowingly, but it makes things seem like I can't get my work done when she asks me to."

" Student assistants should be able to help patrons find things, answer phones, and work the circulation and registration desks sometimes. Should get a choice of retirement plan. Should make at least $5.00 an hour."

" Student assistants should not have to stop what they are doing to help patrons when there are three adults at the desk already."

" The student assistants are often taken advantage of. We (at least in my branch) are not given enough credit for the jobs we do."

" I feel that student assistants are expected to do too much. We shouldn't have to stop what we are doing to help someone or answer the phone when there are

adults at the desk."

" I feel that my job is very important, and most of the time I feel appreciated by the regular staff and patrons. There are certain people who treat me like I am a 'nobody', though."

" As a 16 year old in high school, I feel very fortunate to have the job of a student assistant. Not only am I paid more than minimum wage but I'm also working in a safe environment."

These comments, though sometimes contradictory, reflect the range of viewpoints students have about their jobs and their workplace.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the responses gathered, some general statements can be made about the student assistants working in the Akron Summit County Public Libraries.

1. There are nearly five times as many female students as there are males. Also, there are nearly four times as many students that work at the branches as work at the main library.

2. The students who responded nearly all attend school full time, whether it is high school or college.

3. Most of the students have been working in the ASCPL system for two years or less, indicating a possible high turnover rate among student assistants. It would seem that for the most part the students think of their jobs as a way to make money, not as an investment of time toward a future career.

4. Most of the students perform several jobs in the library every day. The students at the branches have more varied responsibilities than do those at the main library. Student assistants are called upon to work with the public, work on computers, and keep the materials organized each day. It is not an easy job, since they have so many responsibilities. However, most of them seem to enjoy being involved with the public and working in libraries in general.

5. The majority of the student assistants who responded are not interested in library science as a career, although there are some who are considering it a possibility.

6. The student assistants who responded with additional comments to the survey show a wide variety of feelings about their jobs. Some students feel the position is more satisfying than other types of jobs available to young people, such as working in fast food restaurants. Others feel their position is unappreciated and that too much is expected of them. Some feel frustration over their attempts to be promoted within the system. Many expressed dissatisfaction with the management styles of their supervisors, while at the same time expressing satisfaction with the job in general.

The responses to the open ended request for additional comments were particularly interesting to me, as they seemed very sincere. Hopefully, the anonymity of the survey made it easier for the young people to think carefully and answer honestly. Of course, the responses to a survey like this can vary from day to day. If this study were replicated in a few months, when there might be different subjects working in the system, the results would possibly be very different.

I feel that the most significant concern raised by the study is with the varied management/supervision styles among the regular library staff members in ASCPL. It is to be expected, of course, that each branch library or division supervisor will have different approaches to supervision of students and of their roles in the library. However, there should be some consistency encouraged among the professional staff regarding the level of respect and appreciation

shown to student employees. Though their role is often underestimated, it is often these same student employees who perform many of the day to day tasks which keep our doors open. Moreover, it is often these student employees who have the initial and sometimes the only face to face contact with our patrons.

I was pleased with the results of my survey, though I wish there had been more responses. I feel that this survey was successful in showing that, in general, student assistants in Akron are happy in their work even though most do not see themselves in libraries as a career.

I think that this survey provides supervisors and administrative personnel with valuable information regarding how students feel about their jobs. This kind of information could give supervisors suggestions about how students see their work and how much they do every day. More studies should be done of young people as employees in a variety of jobs. As the youth of today become the work force of tomorrow, how young employees view the importance of their jobs and how satisfying the jobs are to them will have a significant influence on their job performance and on their future work ethic. If young people enjoy their work and take pride in it, any workplace can and will benefit.

There is some additional information which I feel as a researcher is worthy of mention. At the time the questionnaire was distributed, the ASCPL system was using an automation system called TLM (The

Library Machine) for circulation and cataloging. The survey was completed just before ASCPL changed its automated system to DYNIX, through Ameritech. With the transfer to the new system, some of the duties students previously performed have changed. Many students now use the new system much less frequently than before, and some of the desk duties have changed. For example preparing date due slips by hand is unnecessary; magazine circulation records are now held within the automated system rather than on paper, and patrons can place their own reserves rather than needing staff assistance. During the transfer, all library staff, including students, had to adjust to new job tasks and learn new computer skills. It was a rough transition period for a while, but things have smoothed out since. Had a survey been conducted during the transfer, the results would surely have been different. Also, there has been a recent trend in the Akron libraries toward hiring full time shelvers, who work 20 hours a week regularly, for both the main building and the branches. The shelvers replace students; therefore, fewer young people are finding jobs in the libraries. These shelvers do not interact with the public, however, as student assistants generally do. The only duty they perform is shelving materials. Student assistants interact with the public each day and serve as support staff , especially at the branches, where their presence is invaluable.

Appendix A

School of Library and Information Science
(216) 672-2782
Fax 216-672-7965

Kent STATE UNIVERSITY
P. O. Box 5190, Kent, Ohio 44242-0001

TO: All Agency and Division Heads
FROM: Elaine McNeal - Portage Lakes Branch
RE: Student Assistant Job Satisfaction Survey

I am conducting a job satisfaction survey of the student assistants in the ASCPL as my research project for my MLS degree. I am asking for your assistance.

The sealed envelopes in this delivery pouch contain a survey and cover letter for each student. The survey is completely anonymous, meant only to give me an idea of how students feel about working in libraries. Also in each envelope is a return envelope addressed to me at Portage Lakes branch where I work. I would like you to see that each student gets an envelope, and encourage them to complete the questionnnaire at their convenience. There is also a delivery pouch through which they can return the surveys to me upon completion. I would like all surveys returned to me no later than Friday, February 2, 1996.

This project is not meant to have any bearing on students' work. The results of the survey will be made available to students upon request. The project has the approval of both Kent State University and ASCPL Administration. Your help in this project is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the Portage Lakes branch, or my research advisor, Dr. Lois Buttlar, (Kent State School of Library and Information Science) at 672-2781.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation.

Elaine N. McNeal

Elaine McNeal
Graduate Student
Portage Lakes Branch Library

Appendix B

Re: Examining the Job Satisfaction Levels of Student Assistant Employees of Akron Summit County Public Libraries: A Survey

January 20, 1996

Dear Student Assistant

I am a graduate student in the School of library and Information Science at Kent State University. As part of the requirements for my master's degree, I am conducting a survey of the job satisfaction of student assistants in ASCPL. The attached questionnaire elicits information that will help me to determine how student assistants feel about their jobs and the importance of student assistant positions in the library. This information would be useful to theorists and practitioners in the field of library and information science.

Confidentiality and anonymity are guaranteed as you do not need to sign your name to the questionnaire; only the investigator has access to the survey data. There is no penalty of any kind should you choose not to participate in this study. While your cooperation is essential to the success of this study, it's of course completely voluntary. A copy of the results of this study will be available upon request.

If you have any further questions about the study, please contact me at the Portage Lakes Branch at (216) 644-7050, or Dr. Lois Buttlar, my research advisor, at (216) 672-2782. If you have any further questions regarding research at Kent State University, you may contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (216) 672-2851.

Thank you for your cooperation; it is much appreciated. Please return the questionnaire via the return envelope addressed to me in delivery by **FEBRUARY 2, 1996.** Once again, thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to this survey. All complete questionnaires should be sent to me at Portage Lakes.

Sincerely,

Elaine N. McNeal
Graduate Student
Portage Lakes Branch Library

Appendix C

STUDENT ASSISTANT JOB SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. Are you a male or a female?

___ male ___ female

2. How long have you been employed by ASCPL?

___ 0-5 months
___ 6 months to 1 year
___ 1 year to 2 years
___ 2 years to 4 years
___ 4 years to 5 years
___ 5 years or more

3. Is this job your first work experience? ___ yes ___ no

4. Approximately how many hours per week do you work? (Average)

___ 0-5
___ 6-10
___ 11-15
___ 16-20
___ more than 20

5. Do you work at Main library or at a branch?

___ Main ___ branch

6. What is your current level of schooling?

___ high school
___ college/university
___ vocational
___ other (please specify:_____)

7. Are you in school part or full time? ___part ___ full

8. Which of the following functions do you perform on the TLM computers? (Please check all that apply.)

___ I do not use the automated system at all
___ registration
___ circulation (charge, discharge, etc.)
___ catalog searches
___ other (Please specify: _____)

9. Which of the following activities do you perform as part of your regular work? (Please check all that apply.)

___ shelving
___ circulation
___ stamping/desk jobs
___ book repair/cleaning
___ filing/clerical tasks
___ discarding/weeding
___ catalog searches
___ call for materials
___ summer reading club
___ assist with displays
___ assist with programs
___ assist with story times
___ other (Please specify:_____)

Please continue on the next page.

10. Of the activities checked in question 10, please list in rank order your favorite three duties.

1._____

2._____

3._____

11. Please provide you level of agreement on the following eight statements. (Check only one agreement level, please.)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I feel my job is important to the library.	___	___	___	___
2. I feel the regular staff sees my job as important.	___	___	___	___
3. I feel my supervisor is flexible in scheduling.	___	___	___	___
4. I feel my supervisor is fair in assigning tasks.	___	___	___	___
5, I feel appreciated by the regular staff.	___	___	___	___
6. I feel appreciated by the patrons.	___	___	___	___
7. I am given opportunities to help with programs.	___	___	___	___
8. I am happy in my current job as student assistant.	___	___	___	___

12. Are you interested in pursuing a career in library science?

___ yes ___ no

13. Please add any further information you feel may be useful to this study in the space provided below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Please place your completed questionnaire in the return envelope provided. Individual envelopes may be returned together in the delivery packet included.

Thank you for your cooperation!

Elaine McNeal
Kent State University
School of Library & Info. Science
Portage Lakes Branch Library

Bibliography

Baldwin, Liz. "A Summer Lesson in Service." School Library Journal 39 (May 1993): 40.

Burbridge, Carol. "Technology and Student Aides." Book Report 12 (March/April 1994): 20-21.

Burgin, Robert and Hansel, Patsy. "Library Management: A Dialogue." Wilson Library Bulletin 1 (September 1991): 66-68.

Corey, Dianne. "Children as Volunteers? Definitely!" Ohio Libraries 5 (January/February 1992): 19.

Eisenhut, Lynn. "Teen Volunteers." VOYA 11 (June 1988: 65-67.

Everhart, Nancy. "Library Aides: If You Fulfill Their Needs, They Will Come (and Work!)" Book Report 13 (May/June 1994): 12-13.

Finney, Kay and McCombs, Kim. "Teenagers Work Well in the Berkeley Public Library." VOYA 17 (April 1994): 11-14.

Fitch, Donna K. "Job Satisfaction Among Library Support Staff in Alabama Academic Libraries." College and Research Libraries 4 (July 1990): 313-320.

Gorman, Jan. "Summertime Friends Program." Nebraska Library Association Quarterly 23 (Summer 1992): 17.

Lipper, Lucretia. "YAs Need TLC, Especially in the Summer." VOYA 16 (June 1993): 76-78.

McGrath, Marsha and Fine, Jane. "Teen Volunteers in the Library." Public Libraries 29 (January/February 1990): 24-28.

Moran, Barbara and Neenan, Peter. "The Public Library's Invisible Managers." Library Journal 11 (June 15, 1987): 27-29.

Nagel, Mary and Molloy, Jean. "In Praise of Students as Supervisors." College & Research Library News 9 (October 1991): 577-578.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (Cont.)

Sager, Donald. "A Season for Service." Public Libraries 32 (May/June 1993): 135-141.

Simmons, Neil. "Job Satisfaction and Styles of Supervision Among Librarians in a London Borough." Assistant Librarian 10 (October 1980): 132-134.